



Mr. *BEDFORD's*

ASSIZE-SERMON,

Preach'd at

Wells in the County of *Somerset,*

ON

Wednesday, *August* the 28th, 1717.

J L



BOOKS printed for Henry Hammond
in Bath.

THREE Sermons preach'd on three particular Subjects;
viz. I. King **GEORGE** the Security of the Church of
England. On *Isa.* 63. 10. II. The Church of *England* the
Standard to regulate all other Churches by, at the Fall of Popery.
On *Isa.* 2. 2. III. An Exhortation to Love and Peace, as the
means to fit us for such Blessings. On *Luke* 19. part of ver. 42.
By *Arthur Bedford*, M. A.

The Doctrine of Obedience and Non-Resistance due to the
Higher Powers, explain'd, stated, and vindicated; with proper In-
ferences from the same: In a Sermon preach'd at the Assizes held
at *Taunton* in the County of *Somerset*, on Tuesday *March* 19.
171 $\frac{6}{7}$. By the same Author.

Scholæ Bathoniensis Primitiæ: seu Excerpta quædam à *Walleri*
& *Miltoni* Poematibus, latino Carminæ, à Scholaribus quibusdam
Scholæ Grammaticalis Bathoniensis, donata.

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Situation, Baths, &c. By *William Oliver*, M. D. and F. R. S.

The Obligations which lie both upon Magistrates
and others, to put the Laws in execution
against Immorality and Profaneness:

I N A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the

A S S I Z E S

H E L D A T

W E L L S in the County of Somerset,

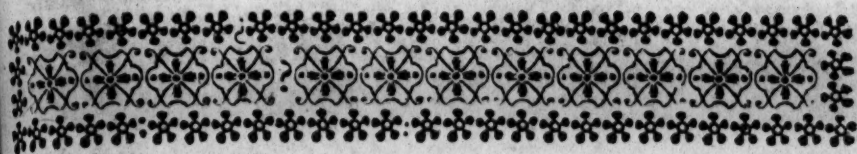
On Wednesday the 28th Day of *August*, in
the Year of our Lord 1717. before Sir R O -
BERT EYRE and Sir JAMES MONTAGUE, be-
ing his Majesty's Judges for the said Circuit.

By *ARTHUR BEDFORD*, M. A. *K*
Chaplain to the most Noble W R I O T H E S L Y Duke
of *Bedford*, and Rector of *Newton St. Loe* near *Bath*
in the same County.

L O N D O N; *J. Leighton*

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August 30. 1717.

WE the Grand Inquest for the County of Somerset, at the Assizes held at Wells, do desire our Thanks to be given to the Reverend Mr. Bedford, for his excellent Sermon preach'd the twenty eighth Day of this Instant, and do desire him to Print it.

John Trenchard,
Foreman.

Thomas Coward,
Jo. Jones,
Jo. Strachey,
William Howe,
Ed. Ryder,
Henry Strode,
Richard Comes,
John Pigott,
Robert Houlton,
William Applin,

Thomas Browne,
George Dodington,
William Baron,
Christopher Keen,
George Andrews,
Ja. Lyde,
Thomas Hodges,
John Lyde,
James Byrt,
Walter Robinson,
John Old,
Robert Hayne.



To the Worshipful

JOSEPH BROWNE Esq;

His MAJESTY's High Sheriff for the
County of Somerset:

And to the Worshipful

The Justices, and the rest of the Grand
Jury for the said County.

GENTLEMEN,



T your Approbation and Request
the following Sermon is made
publick.

As you have been unanimous
at this time, in approving of a
Discourse, where there was no other Design
in view, but the Glory of our Great GOD,
in the suppressing of Immorality and Pro-
faneness; and have acted with the utmost
Unanimity in your late Station, and at all
other times, for the Interest of the King's
most

most Excellent Majesty and his Royal Issue :
 so I cannot but observe from hence, That
 the best Friends to GOD and Religion, are
 also the best Friends to the King and the
 present Government. And this gives me a-
 nother reason to hope, that GOD will in
 his due time send greater Blessings upon the
 King and his Royal Family, and also upon
 this Church and Nation, for the sake of such
 Persons as your selves.

May therefore GOD himself enable both
 you and others to proceed with a just Zeal
 in putting the Laws in execution against such
 Vices, that he may have the Glory, that the
 Nation may have the Benefit, and your
 selves and others may have the Comfort
 both here and hereafter.

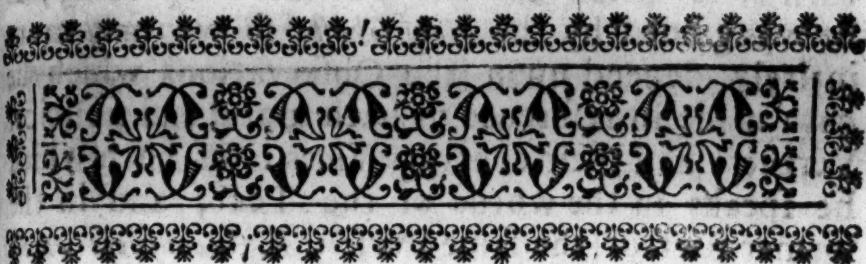
As this is the Prayer of many more in this
 Nation ; so it is also the Prayer of

Your most Sincere,

most Affectionate, and

most Humble Servant,

ARTHUR BEDFORD.



A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

The Affizes held at *Wells* in
the County of *Somerset*, on Wednes-
day *August 28. 1717.*

P R O V. XIV. part of the 34th Ver.

—Sin is a ^{reproach} *Disgrace* to any People.

T H E S E are the Words of *Solomon*
the King of *Israel*, who as he was the
wisest Man in the World, so he was
most capable of discerning what was
right and what was wrong; and as he
was the King of so populous a Nation, so he was
the most capable of discerning what did conduce

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to

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to the Welfare of any Kingdom, and what did turn to its Disadvantage: But more especially, as he was guided by the *Holy Ghost*, so we may more intirely depend upon the Observations which he hath made in reference to both moral and political Vertues, and their contrary Vices: Of both which he speaks in the words of the Text, and in the former part of the same Verse; *Righteousness exalteth a Kingdom, but Sin is a Disgrace to any People.*

The words of the Text will be very plain, if we only observe the Distinction between *private Sins* and *national Sins*; and I hope they will be of good use to us upon this occasion, if I endeavour to apply them to the present State of the *Nation*, and exhort you all to endeavour to prevent such *Sins*, which contract a *publick* and a *national Guilt*.

By a *Private Sin*, I mean a *Sin* which is so privately committed, that no one but the *Sinner*, and his Accomplices or Confederates, knows any thing of it. Now such a Person or Persons are accountable before G O D for the Fact, and may suffer for it in the other World, or G O D himself may inflict particular Judgments for it in this; but as it did escape the Cognizance of the Publick, so the Publick is not accountable for it: Such *Sins* as these are not mention'd in the Text, because as *there is no Man that liveth and sinneth not*, so there is no Nation, which consists of Men, but it must also share in the same *Disgrace*.

A *National Sin* is such a *Sin*, which contracts a *national Guilt*, and the Publick is accountable for it before G O D: And this happens in one or more of the following Cases.

First, When there are no *Laws* made to prevent *Immorality* and *Profaneness*. This hath formerly been the Case in the first Beginnings of Kingdoms,

Kingdoms, before they were well settled, or in such Kingdoms who knew not G O D, or to whom the *Scriptures* were never reveal'd. But this is not our Case; we profess the best Religion in the World, we have the Light of the Holy *Scriptures* to direct us, our Government hath been settled for many Generations, and we have excellent *Laws* made against all manner of *Vices*; and therefore if I could say, these *Laws* are as well put in *execution*, then I might safely affirm, *That Sin would not be a Disgrace to this Nation.*

Secondly, *Sins* are national, when the *Laws* made against them are not put in *execution*. This is the Case in the Text, as appears from the former part of the same Verse, *Righteousness*, צְדָקָה, or *Justice* (as it is in the *Hebrew*) *exalteth a Nation*. Now we know *Justice* is of two sorts; either *commutative*, as in Affairs between Man and Man; or *distributive*, as in Affairs of publick Judicature. Now *commutative Justice* is a very great Ornament to a private Person, it makes him be reckon'd a just and a good Man; but *distributive Justice*, the due dispensing of Rewards and Punishments, *exalts a Nation*, it makes the Government in esteem and reputation: And if so, then *Sin*, when it is wink'd at, or escapes unpunish'd, is a *Disgrace to any People*. If the *Execution* of the *Laws* is so commendable, then the Failure herein must be as blameable: And this happens three ways.

1st, When the *King*, or chief Ruler himself, discourages the due *Execution* of the *Laws*: But this, blessed be G O D, is not our Case. When our present *King* came to the Throne, he immediately issu'd out a *Royal Proclamation* for the suppressing of *Vice*, *Immorality*, and *Profaneness*, requiring and commanding that the *Laws* should be put in *execution*; and lest any should plead Ignorance

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rance of his Will, he order'd this *Proclamation* to be read, as at other times, so also at every *Publick Assize*, immediately before the Charge is given by the Judge to the Grand Jury: And therefore if *Sin* is a *Reproach* to us, the Cause must be either,

2dly, When the *subordinate Magistrates* neglect to put the *Laws* in execution; they are plac'd in *GOD's* stead, and are to act for his Glory and by his Authority. When therefore a *Sin* is committed, if they exert themselves for the Punishment of the *Sinner*, they discharge their own Consciences, and also free the Publick from any *Guilt* or *Disgrace*: But when they are negligent, and *Wickedness* increaseth by their Neglect, the *Guilt* thereof, like that of *Sodom*, cries to *GOD* himself for Justice, and provokes him to make such a People the Object thereof, until they are a *Reproach* and a *Contempt* to all others.

Or, *Lastly*, *Sins* are national, when other People neglect to inform the *Magistrate* of such *Sins*, which they see or hear. A *Magistrate* must act according to *Law*: Now he himself is witness to very few Crimes, and People are very cautious of what they say or do in his Presence; for this reason the Execution of his Office depends almost wholly upon the Informations which are given him: without this he may bear the *Sword* in vain, and he cannot be an *Avenger*, to execute *Wrath* upon him that doth *Evil*. Thus therefore *Sins* may become national, and are a *Disgrace* to that People, who take not such a Method to suppress them.

So that from hence we may observe two Particulars:

First, That it is the Duty of the *Magistrates* to put the *Laws* in execution against all *Sin* and *Wickedness*. And,

Secondly,

Secondly, That it is the Duty of others to give them a just Information.

First, It is the Duty of the Magistrates to put the Laws in execution against all Sin and Wickedness. As GOD is the King of all the Earth, so all Persons who have any Authority in any State or Kingdom, do act by Commission from him: He gives them the governing Part, the Authority to make Laws, and to put them in execution. By him, saith Solomon, Prov. 8. 15, 16. *Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice: By him Princes rule, and Nobles, even all the Judges of the Earth.* They cannot have any Power, but from the uncontested Fountain of all *Legislative Authority*, that is, the Supreme Monarch of the World: And therefore a late ingenious Author * observes, That as the chief Ministers of Kings and Potentates, their Judges and other subordinate Magistrates, are bound to promote the Honour of their Princes, to maintain the Peoples Esteem of their Persons, and Zeal for their Government, to discountenance and punish the turbulent and seditious, and protect the loyal and well-dispos'd Subject; so it is the Duty of such who are Officers, Judges, and Delegates of State in the Divine Monarchy, to take care of their Master's Honour, to manage his Interest with Industry and Fidelity, to promote and preserve in the Minds of the People the most honourable Opinion, and the highest Veneration of his Deity, and the greatest Esteem and Affection to his Government; to discourage and deter profane and flagitious Persons, to suppress and exterminate the Atheist and Blasphemer, the impious Scoffer and Derider of Religion, and to punish every open and daring Sinner, as

* Sir Richard Blackmore's *Essays*, Vol. I. p. 438.

the declar'd Enemies of Heaven, and contumacious Opposers of Divine Authority. This is the Reason that Magistrates are often call'd Gods in Scripture: Thus *Exod. 21. 6.* Then his Master shall bring him to the Judges; in Hebrew אלהים the Gods. Thus *Exod. 22. 8.* The Master of the House shall be brought unto the Judges; in Hebrew again, to the Gods. And in the next Verse, Both Parties shall come before the Judges; in Hebrew, before the Gods. And *Ver. 28.* Thou shalt not revile the Gods, or Judges, nor curse the Ruler of thy People. And *Psal. 81. 1, 6.* GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty; he is a Judge among the Gods, or among the Judges: I have said, Ye are Gods, and ye are all the Children of the most High. And now, shall GOD take so much care to honour the Magistrate, and shall not the Magistrate take care that GOD may be honour'd also? A Christian Magistrate is *Custos utriusque Tabulae*, he is intrusted with the ten Commandments, and charg'd with the Law of GOD, to see it kept by those who are under his Authority; the Authority which he hath, and the Pre-eminence which GOD hath given him above other Men, is given him for that end; he is the Minister of GOD, a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil; and therefore when Vice is unpunish'd, he beareth the Sword in vain. Our Sins are then attended with greater Aggravations; and what holy Job said of Whoredom, may be said of every Sin among us, *Job 31. 11.* This is an heinous Crime, yea it is an Iniquity to be punish'd by the Judges.

And as it is the Duty of the Magistrate to put the Laws in execution against all Sin and Wickedness; so, Secondly, It is the Duty of others to give them a just Information. This, I hope, will be also as evident, if we seriously consider,

1st, That

1st, That the informing of the Magistrate is one of the most effectual Methods for the suppressing of Vice. And,

2dly, That we ought to take such Methods as are most effectual to this end.

1st, The informing of the Magistrate is one of the most effectual Methods for the suppressing of Vice. This we may learn from common Experience; for where People are zealous to prosecute Offenders, there other People are afraid to be guilty of Offences. Every Man is willing to avoid the publick Shame and the Punishment, and then of course avoids the Methods which expose him to it. When one Man is made an Example, another is afraid to be guilty, lest he should suffer next; then the future Acts of Wickedness grow less and less; and if Men are still so hardy as to go on in Sin, they will endeavour to sin so privately as not to be discover'd. There is a secret Fear and a secret Shame in wicked Men, which will restrain them when they find that care will be taken to bring them to Justice for their Wickedness; and such Cities or Places which have been zealous herein, can testify by Experience the Truth hereof, and that also whenever their Zeal hath abated, then Iniquity hath abounded. Accordingly G O D speaks concerning a false Witness, Deut. 19. 18, 19, 20. that the Judges shall take care to detect and punish him; so, saith he, thou shalt put away the Evil from among you: The Sin is no longer national, when it is punish'd. But there is another Reason, it will prevent the Commission of the same; And those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such Evil among you. Thus Coercion and Punishment is the Cure for such Evils, and without this they would grow worse and worse. Indeed one would think, that Men

Men might be prevail'd upon by solid Arguments, or the Apprehensions of GOD's Vengeance might restrain their Practices; but we are all too sensible of the contrary. In this Age the Generality of Men live by Sense, and not by Faith; the Prospect of the other World is at such a distance, that it affects but very few: and therefore when GOD delays to punish by his immediate hand, and Men are careless to prosecute the *Laws*, others do falsely conclude, that they may live as they please. And thus, as *Solomon* observ'd, *Eccles. 8.*

11. Because Sentence against an evil Work is not executed speedily, therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully set in them to do Evil. If we only persuade a Sinner to leave off his wicked Course of Life, he presently bids us mind our own Business; he will not be wrought upon by Persuasions or Arguments, he is unacquainted with serious thinking, and his Mind is so full in the Pursuit of some present Enjoyment, that he hath not time to look beyond the Grave. If a Minister denounces from the Pulpit the Terrors of the LORD, to persuade Men to Repentance, these are look'd upon but as words of course. When a Sermon is ended, it is seldom minded any longer; our Exhortations and Reproofs are generally spent in vain, and we may say with the Prophet *Isaiab.* *LORD, who hath believ'd our Report?* We read also * that in the Primitive Church there was a godly Discipline, that such Persons as stood convicted of notorious Crimes, were put to open Penance, and punish'd in this World, that their Souls might be sav'd in the Day of the LORD; and that others, admonish'd by their Examples, might be the more afraid to offend. But we

* Liturgy for Ashwednesday.

find how ineffectual the *Church-Censures* are for such a purpose. We find what care is taken to avoid them, how little they are valued at best, and how apt Men are in such cases to plead for the worst of *Vices*. So that we can only wish, that *the said Discipline may be restored*, but we can hardly expect it. Thus all other Methods to suppress *Vice*, excepting only the informing of the *Magistrate*, are ineffectual, but it increases and triumphs in defiance of all.

That therefore it is our Duty to inform the *Magistrate* in such a case, will further appear, because we ought to take such Methods as are most effectual to suppress it. For,

1st, *It is a Duty which we owe to GOD.*

2dly, *It is a Duty which we owe to our selves.*

3dly, *It is a Duty which we owe to the Sinner.*

4thly, *It is a Duty which we owe to others.* And,

Lastly, *It is a Duty which we owe to the Nation where we live.*

1st, *It is a Duty which we owe to God.* The Commands both in the *Old and New Testament* are mention'd in a plain and positive Style: *GOD* hath said, *Lev. 5. 1.* that if a Soul sin, and hear the Voice of swearing, and is a witness whether he hath seen or known of it, if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity. Besides, there are other Commands in more general Terms; the *Apostle, Heb. 3. 12, 13.* saith, *Take heed, Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living GOD.* We are to take heed not only to our selves, but also to others; and to this end we are commanded to exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any one should be harden'd through the Deceitfulness of Sin. And *Chap. 10. 24, 25.* Let us consider one another to provoke unto Love, and to

good Works, exhorting one another, and so much the more, as we see the Day approaching. Besides, the Neglect hereof incurs a Guilt; it is a Breach of the Law which GOD hath given us, and a Contempt of the Law-maker. We are told, *Prov. 29. 24.* that *whoso is Partner with a Thief, hateth his own Soul; he heareth cursing, and bewrayeth it not.* So that to hear Cursing, and not to inform against it, is to hate our Souls, to be Partners with it, and to bring the Guilt upon our selves. So *Lev. 19. 17.* *Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart; thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour, and not suffer Sin in him.* The chief Command is to love our Neighbour as our selves, and we are to express this Love in rebuking him when he sins, and in preventing it for the future; otherwise we really hate him, and are guilty of the greatest Injury which we can do to him. Nay, *St. John* goes farther yet, *1 Epist. 3. 15.* *Whosoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer, and ye know, that no Murderer hath eternal Life abiding in him.* He who doth not reprove his Brother, but suffers him to sin, hates him; he who hates him, is in the sight of GOD guilty of Murder: and such a Man without Repentance and Amendment is not fit for Heaven.

Besides, the Glory of GOD is directly concerned. *Swearing, Cursing, and Blasphemy,* have a natural Tendency to create in those who are guilty, and in those who hear it, mean and low Thoughts of GOD, and a Belief that there is no GOD at all. Nay, all *Profaneness* and *Immorality* uihers in a disrespect of his Law, an undervaluing of his Promises, and a slighting of his Threatnings. Neither do these things tend only to the Dishonour of GOD among our selves, but also among others. The Name of GOD was blasphem'd

phemed among the *Gentiles* because of the *Jews*; and the Name of *G O D* is blasphemed by *Turks*, *Jews* and *Infidels*, when they see such as call themselves *Christians* leading the Lives of *Heathens*. So that the suppressing and discouraging such Sins is a Duty which we owe to *G O D*.

2dly, *It is a Duty which we owe to our selves*. If we are silent when we hear the Name of *G O D* profaned by *Oaths*, *Curses*, and *blasphemous Expressions*, we shall contract a Guilt, and be accountable for the same; if we conceal such Offences as are against *G O D*, he will look upon us as Partners in them. We are certainly accountable for the Sins which we might have prevented, as well as for those which we have actually committed. For this reason *St. Paul* chargeth *Timothy*, 1 *Epist.* 5. 22. that he would not be a *Partaker with other Mens Sins*, but keep himself pure. The Load of Sins which we our selves have committed, is enough to sink us into Hell; and therefore we should so far pity our own Souls, as not to add another Load of Sins committed by others. *Eli* was a good Man, notwithstanding any thing which we find relating to himself, and the *Jews* speak of him in their Writings with Respect and Esteem; however he was to blame for not endeavouring to suppress the *Vices* of his Family with a suitable Zeal, and therefore he brought a Judgment upon himself and his Posterity: *G O D* told him, that his House should be judged for the Iniquity which he knew, because his Sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn, saith the *L O R D*, that the Iniquity of *Eli's House* shall not be purged with Sacrifice nor Oblation for ever. Besides, by our conscientious Discharge of this Duty, we not only free our selves from the Guilt, but also increase our Reward.

ward. The Prophet *Daniel* tells us, *Chap. 12. 3.* that *they that are wise shall shine hereafter as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever.* Who knows then what Success we might have upon our conscientious Endeavours to reform the Nation, and how greatly our Labour may be rewarded? And therefore the Care which we ought to have of our own Welfare should induce us in this manner to promote the Good of our Neighbour.

3dly, *It is a Duty which we owe to the Sinner.* If we have any Charity for the Souls of others, we should endeavour to prevent their utter Ruin, admonish them of their Error, and stop up the Road to Hell by a due *Execution of the Laws* of the Land. If our Enemies Ox or Sheep were fallen into a Pit, we should think our selves obliged to help it out again; how much more then should we strive to deliver the Souls of our Fellow-Christians from the Mouth of Hell? If their Houses were on fire, we should think our selves oblig'd in Conscience to put it out; and shall we not take care to secure their Souls from the Fire of Hell? If we knew that they were taking Poison for their Bodies, we should warn them of the Danger; but when they are poisoning their Souls, we let them alone. If there was a wild Beast let loose in a Road, where our Neighbour is going, we should tell him of it; but when we know that *Sin* is like a *Serpent*, and the *Teeth* of it like the *Teeth* of a *Lion*, slaying the Souls of Men, we let our Neighbour expose himself, and give him no warning. In this case if we are forc'd to put the *Laws in execution* against such a Man, it is the greatest Kindness that we can shew him; The Wounds of such a Friend are faithful, when the Kisses of an Enemy are deceitful. The lancing such

a Sore is sometimes necessary for the Cure ; and tho it may be tedious at first, yet afterward it may be own'd as the greater Act of Mercy. I am sure St. *James* gives us this Encouragement; Chap. 5. 19, 20. *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him, tho the Error is either in Faith or Practice, let him know, that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins.* If by this means he may be brought to see his Folly, and turn from the same, the Guilt of all his Sins may be done away, and he with others may be made an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

4thly, *It is a Duty which we owe to others.* If an Offender is prosecuted, he is become a publick Example ; this makes others beware, when they know that they expose themselves to the same Penalty ; and so we reform not the Offender only, but also them who hear of the Punishment inflicted. What a multitude of *Sins* we may by this means prevent, G O D only knows, when we find, by sad Experience, that other Methods are ineffectual. If we mention *the Terrors* of the L O R D, and the Vengeance of eternal Fire, this makes but a small Impression ; People look upon this as at a great distance, and could we judge by their Lives and Conversations, we might conclude that they do not believe it to be true: But tell them of a *Magistrate*, or of an Information against them, and then they seem to be more afraid. This is what they know may be done ; and if it was always put in execution, it might do more Service in this respect than all other Methods whatsoever : and therefore if Iniquity abounds, and if all manner of Impieties are publick

lick and barefac'd, the Fault lies in such who take not this Method to curb and restrain them.

Besides, it is a Charity which we owe to the *Poor*. If an Offender is prosecuted, and forc'd to pay for his Offences, the Mony so paid must, according to Law, be given to the *Poor* of the Parish where such an Offence is committed; and did we take this Method, we might, in a greater measure, provide for their Maintenance, which, together with the other Provision that the Law makes, might render their Lives more comfortable. We often talk of Charity to the *Poor*, we wish that their Maintenance was better, and we speak pitifully of such Families who are in distress; and why then do we not take this Method to help them? He who hath not a Purse to relieve, hath a Tongue to inform, which is the same to the *Poor* as if he gave a Shilling or two out of his own Pocket. We all look upon the wronging of the *Poor* to be the greatest Injustice; and why then should we, by our Silence, keep from them that Maintenance which the Law allows them? And therefore when we hear any Man swear or curse, or see him guilty of such Immoralities, for which the Law obligeth him to pay in this manner, let us not by our Silence pervert the charitable Design of the Lawmakers, but consider what Solomon saith, Prov. 22. 22, 23. *Rob not the Poor because he is poor, neither oppress the Afflicted in the Gate; for the LORD will plead their Cause, and spoil the Soul of those that spoiled them.*

Lastly, It is a Duty which we owe to the Nation where we live, it is the way to obtain a Blessing upon the Publick. When the *Israelites* had committed Idolatry, Exod. 32. 26, &c. Then Moses stood

stood in the Gate of the Camp, and said, Who is on the LORD's side? let him come unto me: And all the Sons of Levi gather'd themselves together unto him. And after he had commanded them to execute Vengeance on such as were guilty, he gave this Reason, *Ver. 29. For Moses had said, Consecrate your selves to-day unto the LORD, every Man upon his Son, and upon his Brother, that he may bestow upon you a Blessing this day.* How can we expect a Blessing, when our Sins cry for Judgment louder than our Prayers do cry for Mercy? How can we hope that GOD will at any time go forth with our Armies, when we send Armies of Oaths and Curses unto Heaven against him; when we call upon him to pour down his Judgments, and every one is negligent in suppressing such Provocations? Let us all but discharge our Consciences in this Particular, and I doubt not of such Success as will answer our Expectations.

Nay, this is the only way to prevent publick Judgments. We all know that publick Sins do call for publick Calamities: These destroy'd the old World by the Flood; these turn'd the Cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into Ashes; these occasion'd so many Punishments upon the Children of Israel in the Wilderness, and afterwards sold them into the hands of their Enemies; these provok'd GOD to send them Captives into Babylon, and afterward destroy'd their City and Temple, and rooted them out from the good Land which GOD had given them: and without infinite Mercy, they may have the same Effects upon us which they had upon others. Now when Sins are prosecuted, and the Offenders are punish'd, they who afterward take no warning, must answer for themselves, and the Guilt lies only upon them-

themselves : But when there is no *Law* made to restrain such *Impieties*, or which is the same, when the *Laws* which are made are not put in *execution*, either thro the neglect of the *Magistrates*, or the neglect of *Informers*, then there is a publick Guilt, and this may cause a publick Calamity. When *Sins* are not punish'd in the *lower Courts of Justice* here on Earth, let the Neglect or Cause be wherever it will, the Guilt of them appeals to the *higher Court* of Heaven, and there cries aloud for Vengeance. This obligeth GOD to maintain his own Cause, to take the Matter into his own hands, and punish such publick *Impieties* with publick Judgments ; and therefore it is most certainly our Duty to take such notice of the *Sins* committed by others, as may be most effectual to prevent them for the future.

From what hath been said, I must crave leave to admonish all *Magistrates* to exert themselves in executing the *Laws* against all *Immorality* and *Prophaneness*. The *King's* most excellent *Majesty* seems to call upon us in the words of *David*, the Man after GOD's own Heart, *Psal.* 94. 16. *Who will rise up for me against the Evil-doers ? Or who will take my part against the Workers of Iniquity ?* Indeed the *Proclamation* is to all ; but you, Gentlemen, may reckon your selves as principally concern'd, since he commands you in particular to be diligent herein. You act by his Commission, you have sworn to put the *Laws* in execution, and to spare no one for Favour or Affection ; and therefore you must consider what a Load of Guilt your Remissness herein must leave upon your Consciences. We frequently join with you in Prayers to Almighty GOD, and in the words of our excellent *Liturgy*, *That it would please him to bless*
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and keep the Magistrates, giving them Grace to execute Justice, and to maintain Truth: And that he would grant unto all those, that are put in Authority under the King, that they may truly and indifferently minister Justice, to the Punishment of Wickedness and Vice, and to the maintenance of true Religion and Vertue. This is the matter of your frequent Prayers; and therefore if you make it not the matter of your constant Endeavours, your Prayers will rise up in judgment against you, they will appear to be a mocking of GOD, and condemn you at the last Day. It is a dismal Account which the Scripture gives of the People of Laish, Judg. 18. 7. *They dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure, and there was no Magistrate in the Land that might put them to shame in any thing.* But when this was the Case, they were ripe for Destruction; and, ver. 27. *The Children of Dan smote them with the edge of the Sword, and burnt their City with fire.* These things are written for our Example, and we may plainly learn from them, that if *Magistrates* are negligent in the Cause of GOD, he will find out some other Instruments to vindicate his Honour. I cannot but lay before you the Instructions which good King Jehoshaphat gave to the Judges in his time; 2 Chron. 19. 5, &c. *He set Judges in the Land, throughout all the fenced Cities of Judah, City by City: And he said unto the Judges, Take heed what ye do, for ye judge not for Man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the Judgment. Wherefore now, let the Fear of the LORD be upon you, take heed, and do it; for there is no Iniquity with the LORD our GOD, nor respect of Persons, nor taking of Gifts. Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect Heart. Ye shall even*

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warn the People, that they trespass not against the LORD, and so Wrath come upon you, and upon your Brethren: This do, and ye shall not trespass; deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good. Neither was the care of this good King in vain; for we are told in the following Chapter, that when the Moabites and the Ammonites and others came against him to Battle, and his Case seem'd desperate, by reason of the Fewness of his Friends, and the Number of his Enemies; yet GOD blessed him with Victory and Success, so that, *Ver. 30. The Realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his GOD gave him Rest round about.* And thus as the Negligence of the Magistrates in Laish was the Forerunner of their Destruction in their greatest Prosperity; so the Zeal of Jehoshaphat, and the Judges in his time, was the means of preserving the Children of Israel in their greatest Adversity. I cannot therefore but add in our present Case, *Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good: Execute the Laws with Vigour against Immorality and Profaneness;* exert your selves herein, it is the Cause of GOD, and he will make it prosper, and prosper the Kingdom for your sakes.

Lastly, Let me exhort all others to be zealous in informing the Magistrates of such Offences: without your Information they can do little; for a Magistrate must act according to Law, and the Law cannot be executed without sufficient Evidence. We call our selves *Christians*, which implies, that we should be a holy People above others; and how then can we endure so much Iniquity among us? We call our selves *Christians*, which is an honourable Title above other People; and how then can we suffer that among us, which

which is a *Disgrace* to any People in the World? Methinks to hear the Name of G O D profan'd by bitter *Oaths* and *Curses*, or to hear *Vice* encourag'd by *lewd Discourses*, should raise the Blood, and stir us up to an holy Indignation against it; and what Detestation should we then shew to *wicked Actions*?

But now who can forbear to lament, when he thinks that we are grown to such a pass, that the very Name of an Informer is become odious among us? That such have all the Censures and Reflections cast upon them, that either Malice or *Satan* himself can invent: That they are become the Scorn of the World: That they are in danger of Vexations, Law-Suits, and sometimes of their Lives, because they discharge their Duty: Nay, that they are *in Perils from their own Countrymen*, and such especially whose Souls they endeavour to save. Is that Duty become odious which we owe to G O D? Is it an odious thing to keep our own Souls clear from the Blood of others? Is it an odious thing to endeavour the Conversion of our Neighbour, to promote the Interest of the Poor, to strive to reform the World, and to turn away those Punishments which our *Sins* have deserv'd? This seems, alas! to be the last Remedy; and if that is become odious, what can be expected but Death and Destruction?

However, let us not be discourag'd from well-doing. If our own Consciences can testify, that we sincerely aim at the Glory of G O D, and the Conversion of Man, we need not value the Envy, Slanders, and Aspersions of the World; there will be that Satisfaction in the Discharge of our Duty, which will make amends for all. If G O D

blesteth your Endeavours, and the Nation for your sakes, there will be an unspeakable Satisfaction that you have been the Instruments of so much Good in the World; or if your Endeavours do not thus succeed, but the Sins of the Nation do call for fresh Judgments, you may then consider, that *you have delivered your own Souls*. None of this Guilt will lie at your door, and you shall not be accountable for the Consequence thereof. If the Reflections of Men in this case shall hinder you from promoting the Glory of GOD, what do think you should have done, if he had called you to be Martyrs for his Name? If you are not faithful when you run so small a Hazard, how should you have been faithful, if the Danger had been much greater? Or if you are afraid to expose your selves, whilst the *Laws* are your Security, and restrain the Malice of your Enemies, what should you have done, had the *Laws* been against you, and exposed you to their Fury? Our *blessed Saviour* endeavoured to reform the World, he *went about doing good*, and healing the Diseases both of Soul and Body; and for this reason he was censured, persecuted and reviled. Now tho there are many things which he did, that we must not imitate, and the *Sanhedrim* was so corrupt, that he could not be heard; yet whilst we pursue the same End of Charity to the Souls of Men, though in a different Method, we may comfort our selves, that we are following his Example. And then if *they call the Master of the House Beelzebub*, we need not wonder if they do the same by *those of his Household*. The words, which he himself hath spoken, may keep up our Spirits in the discharge of our Duty: *If ye were of this World, the World would love his own; but because ye*
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are not of the *World*, but I have chosen you out of the *World*, therefore the *World* hateth you. Remember the Saying which I said unto you, *The Servant is not greater than his Lord*. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. And therefore we have greater reason to conclude, that the Cause is of *GOD*, when we find the wicked and profane part of the *World* so much to oppose it. How then can we pretend to be Christians, unless we take the part of *Christ* against the *Workers of Iniquity*? This was the reason for which the *Son of GOD* was manifested, namely, that he might destroy the *Works of the Devil*: And why should not we join with him in so good a Design? If the *Devil* hath his Agents to draw Men into *Sin*, why should not *Christ* have his Agents to turn them unto *Righteousness*? If some Men think it strange, that others run not with them into the same *Excess of Riot*; how strange would it be, if no care was taken to prevent that *Riot* into which others do run? It will be our Satisfaction in Heaven to behold those whom we have been instrumental to bring thither, and why should we not take such a Method to increase our Glory?

To conclude: We have, by the Blessing of *GOD*, very good *Laws* made to prevent *Immorality* and *Profaneness*; these *Laws* are so publick, that almost every *Sinner* knows the Penalty. We are encouraged to put them in execution by frequent *Proclamations*, and by the Readiness of most *Magistrates* to prosecute Offenders when Information is given; and therefore let not others be wanting on their parts to carry on so good a Design. We should blame those who conceal *Treason* against an earthly *King*, and why should we conceal

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conceal such Acts of Rebellion against the King of Kings? Let us strive in this manner to turn Men from the Power of Satan to the Kingdom of GOD. Let us sincerely act for his Glory, and notwithstanding all outward Opposition, we shall certainly find the Benefit of our sincere Endeavours both here and hereafter.

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